

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A device for retracting tissue to provide minimally invasive access to a surgical location of a patient, said device comprising:

a first elongate body at least partially defining a passage through which surgical instruments can be inserted to the surgical location, and wherein said first elongate body is capable of having an inserted configuration when inserted within the patient wherein the cross-sectional area of said passage at a first location is greater than the cross-sectional area of said passage at a second location, wherein the first location is distal to the second location; and

a second elongate body pivotably coupled with the first elongate body and extending proximally therefrom;

wherein at least the second elongate body is configured to at least partially reside adjacent the skin of the patient.

2. The device of Claim 1, wherein the second elongate body is pivotably coupled to the first elongate body by a single fastener.

3. The device of Claim 1, further comprising a fastener, and wherein the first elongate body further comprises a first hole and the second elongate body comprises a second hole, the fastener configured to extend through the first hole and the second hole.

4. The device of Claim 3, wherein the fastener comprises a rivet.

5. The device of Claim 1, wherein the passage is sized such that more than one surgical instrument can be positioned simultaneously within the passage along the entire length of the passage.

6. The device of Claim 1, wherein the first elongate body is sized to provide access to a spinal location.

7. The device of Claim 1, wherein a length is defined between a proximal end of the second elongate body and a distal end of the first elongate body, the length selected such that the proximal end of the second elongate body can be positioned adjacent the skin the patient and the distal end of the first elongate body can be positioned inside the patient adjacent a spinal location.

8. The device of Claim 7, wherein the length is selected such that the proximal end of the second elongate body can be positioned outside patient.

9. The device of Claim 1, wherein the passage has a width at the first location that is greater than about 14 mm.

10. The device of Claim 1, wherein the passage has a width at the first location that is between about 14 mm and about 36 mm.

11. The device of Claim 1, wherein the first elongate body is configured to be manually expanded to the inserted configuration.

12. The device of Claim 11, wherein the passage is sized to receive an expander tool adapted to manually expand said first elongate body.

13. The device of Claim 1, wherein the inserted configuration of the first elongate body is conical.

14. The device of Claim 1, wherein the first location is at the distal end of the first elongate body.

15. The device of Claim 1, wherein the second elongate body comprises a tubular portion.

16. The device of Claim 15, wherein the first elongate body is coupled with the tubular portion and extends distally therefrom.

17. A device for retracting tissue to provide minimally invasive access to a spinal location of a patient, said device comprising:

a first elongate body at least partially defining a passage through which surgical instruments can be inserted to the spinal location, and wherein said first elongate body is expandable from a contracted configuration for insertion to an expanded configuration wherein the cross-sectional area of said passage at a first location is greater than the cross-sectional area of said passage at a second location, wherein the first location is distal to the second location; and

a second elongate body pivotably coupled with the first elongate body and extending proximally therefrom;

wherein at least the second elongate body is configured to at least partially reside adjacent the skin of the patient.

18. The device of Claim 17, wherein the second elongate body is pivotably coupled to the first elongate body by a single fastener.

19. The device of Claim 17, further comprising a fastener, and wherein the first elongate body further comprises a first hole and the second elongate body comprises a second hole, the fastener configured to extend through the first hole and the second hole.

20. The device of Claim 19, wherein the fastener comprises a rivet.

21. The device of Claim 17, wherein the passage is sized such that more than one surgical instrument can be positioned simultaneously within the passage along the entire length of the passage.

22. The device of Claim 17, wherein the passage has a width at the first location that is greater than about 14 mm.

23. The device of Claim 17, wherein the passage has a width at the first location that is between about 14 mm and about 36 mm.

24. The device of Claim 17, wherein the passage is sized to receive an expander tool adapted to manually expand said first elongate body.

25. The device of Claim 17, wherein the expanded configuration of the first elongate body is conical.

26. The device of Claim 17, wherein the first location is at the distal end of the first elongate body.

27. The device of Claim 17, wherein the second elongate body comprises a tubular portion.

28. The device of Claim 27, wherein the first elongate body is coupled with the tubular portion and extends distally therefrom.

29. The device of Claim 17, wherein a length is defined between a proximal end of the second elongate body and a distal end of the first elongate body, the length selected such that the proximal end of the second elongate body can be positioned adjacent the skin the patient and the distal end of the first elongate body can be positioned inside the patient adjacent a spinal location.

30. The device of Claim 29, wherein the length selected such that the proximal end of the second elongate body can be positioned outside patient.

31. A method for providing minimally invasive access to a spinal location of a patient, said method comprising:

inserting an access device through an incision in the skin of the patient, the access device having a first elongate body and a second elongate body coupled with and extending proximally from the first elongate body, the first elongate body at least partially defining a passage through which surgical instruments can be inserted to the spinal location;

advancing the access device to the spinal location;

actuating the access device from a first configuration having a first cross-sectional area at a distal portion of the access device to a second configuration having an enlarged cross-sectional area at the distal portion; and

pivoting the second elongate body with respect to the first elongate body.

32. The method of Claim 31, wherein the pivoting is provided about a fastener.

33. The method of Claim 32, wherein the first elongate body comprises a first hole and the second elongate body comprises a second hole, the fastener extending through the first hole and the second hole.

34. The method of Claim 32, wherein the fastener comprises a rivet.

35. The method of Claim 31, further comprising:

inserting a first surgical instrument into the passage;

advancing the first surgical instrument to the spinal location;

inserting a second surgical instrument into the passage; and

advancing the second surgical instrument to the spinal location while the first surgical instrument is in the passage.

36. The method of Claim 31, wherein the passage has a width at the distal portion that is greater than about 14 mm.

37. The method of Claim 31, wherein the passage has a width at the distal portion that is between about 14 mm and about 36 mm.

38. The method of Claim 31, wherein actuating the access device further comprises manually expanding the first elongate body to the second configuration.

39. The method of Claim 38, further comprising:

advancing an expander tool into the passage within the first elongate body;  
and

manipulating the expander tool to manually expand the first elongate body.

40. The method of Claim 31, wherein the first elongate body is conical in the second configuration.

41. The method of Claim 31, wherein the distal portion includes the distal end of the first elongate body.

42. The method of Claim 31, wherein the second elongate body comprises a tubular portion.

43. The method of Claim 42, wherein the first elongate body is coupled with the tubular portion and extends distally therefrom.